

**THE PARTY  
OF THE  
WORKING  
CLASS**

**Price 6d.**



# THE PARTY OF THE WORKING CLASS

There have not always been independent political parties representing the interests of the working class. On the contrary, it is only between fifty and sixty-five years ago that such parties were formed in the main European countries. In other parts of the world—for instance, New Zealand—the step took place still later, while in the U.S.A. a really **mass** party of the working class has still not been founded. (A mass party, it will be noted, is not a party **composed** of large masses of people, but **supported** by masses of people. Furthermore, any party, whether working class or bourgeois, does not comprise all members of the class it represents, but only the most advanced members. But see later also.)

**The reason for the comparatively late development of working class parties in modern history is that it is only in comparatively recent years that the workers in the capitalist countries (or a decisive section of them) have become conscious of themselves as a separate from, and actually opposed to, those of the exploiting classes.**

The rise of modern capitalism during the 19th century established the capitalist class as the ruling class. As the century developed, it became even more clear that they were the direct exploiters, the real enemy of the workers. The old land-owning aristocracy had become subordinated to, and merged with, the new industrialist capitalist: the fight between them became increasingly a sham fight. In earlier times, for instance, in the French Revolutions of 1789 and 1830, the workers had supported the then historically progressive capitalists, against the old reactionary land-owning class.

The victory of the capitalist class over the latter, however, brought the workers face to face with the new ruling class, the industrialist capitalists, who, as mentioned above, first subordinated and then largely merged with the old landed gentry.

## **RISE OF EARLY WORKERS' MOVEMENTS**

While the middle of the 19th century saw the great British Chartist movement and the Continental revolution of 1848, with the workers in Britain and France at least, playing an important independent role, the time was still too early for the formation of

a permanent party representing the working class. True, there was the famous Communist League, and several minor working class organisations, but even the League, despite the efforts of Marx and Engels, did not long survive the repression which set in with the unsuccessful ending (for the workers,) of the revolutions of '48. Not until the 60's; following the American Civil War and economic depression, did working class political organisation really recommence in Europe.

The International Workingmen's Association, the First International, as it is usually called, was an association to which were affiliated trade unions and political organisations of many countries. Nine years of active existence resulted in Europe, from 1864 to 1873, before, owing to the reaction following on the suppression of the Paris Commune and to the disruptive activities of Bakunin and the anarchists, it was transferred to America where it was finally wound up in 1876.

**The work of the I.W.A., however, was not in vain. History was working with it and the 70's saw the formation, on the basis of earlier parties, of a social democratic party in Germany and, later, in other European countries.**

This process was helped by the intensification of the class struggle which accompanied the birth pangs of the stage of capitalism, which is now called **imperialism**.

#### **WORKERS' PARTIES EMERGE**

Hence, we can see what is meant by the Marxist-Leninist statement that **"a party is part of a class."** In earlier times, the land-owning class and the capitalist class had their parties (Tories and Whigs, e.g. in England), but the workers did not possess one. In the latter part of the 19th century, however, the workers themselves began to form their own political parties.

These parties were, on the whole, suitable for the needs of that time, though Marx and Engels, even during the 70's and 80's, had occasion to criticise them for opportunist traits. This characterisation applies also to the 2nd International during the first period of its existence—say from its foundation in 1889 until the beginning of the present century. The 2nd International, as we saw earlier, was a Socialist International, based on Marxist theory but became infected with opportunism, i.e. subordination of the interests of the working class as a whole to those of the bourgeoisie and their hangers-on within the labour movement.

**Nevertheless, the 2nd International, in its earlier period of existence, fulfilled a task of historic importance to the working class by widening the scope of socialism, linking it up on a mass scale with**

**trade unionism, which itself expanded enormously during this period, and challenging the capitalist class on behalf of the working class in the Parliamentary arena.**

The 2nd International and its parties came to attach such exaggerated importance to representation in and "capture" of Parliament, that it is possible to overlook the genuine significance of the entry of working class parties into Parliamentary politics at this time.

For, this event signified that, for the first time in history, the workers as a class were confronting the political parties of the bourgeoisie in Parliament, which had hitherto been the preserve of the bourgeois parties. This widened the scope of the socialist movement, brought it into touch with people who had never heard of it previously and gave unprecedented opportunities for organisation, propaganda and agitation for the attainment of Socialism. How these opportunities were thrown away, how collaboration with the bourgeoisie was increasingly practised; how illusions about the "inevitability of gradualism" came to dominate the leadership of the 2nd International we know.

#### **MACHINES FOR ELECTING M.P.'s**

The point we must note here is that, particularly from the beginning of the 20th century, onward (i.e. from the period of the commencement of fully developed imperialism) the parties of the 2nd International became, first and foremost, mere machines for the election of representatives to Parliament. In Stalin's words, "... it was not the Party but the Parliamentary fraction that was the fundamental political organisation of the proletariat." ("Foundations of Leninism.")

**Yet, while this process of decay and corruption was going on, the need for a strongly organised, disciplined party of the working class was more urgent than it had ever been. The new era of imperialism brought with it intensified class contradictions. Monopoly capital, giant trusts and combines, attained a power that made new methods of struggle necessary on the part of the workers, if they were to cope with them.**

Exploitation of the workers became intensified, i.e. the gulf between what the workers produced and what they received in wages widened, the tempo of work increased and workers became "too old at 40." Inter-imperialist rivalry deepened and preparations for a redivision of the world by military force, began in earnest. In the colonies, and dependent countries the process of inhuman exploitation of the inhabitants intensified and the super-profits thus extracted not only enriched the imperialists and cor-



the 2nd Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. in 1903, Lenin was able to set out the main characteristics of the "Party of a new type" that Nevertheless, by 1903, in his work "What is to be done" and at- rupted their "labour lieutenants," but were the cause of industrial decay in the imperialist countries themselves.

### **MOVING INTO ERA OF WARS AND CLASS STRUGGLES**

Capitalism was advancing toward an era of general crisis, to a round of wars and class struggles beyond anything previously known. And while capitalism was thus moving toward crisis, the politicians of the 2nd International parties were basing themselves on organisational forms that had outlived their usefulness and on reformist theories that simply reflected the interests of the bourgeoisie.

**A new type of working class party was needed and this was provided by the genius of Lenin and the historical experience of the Bolsheviks.**

**The Bolshevik Party was the first "Party of a new type" which history has known.**

was needed to carry out the socialist revolution. Not until 1912, however, after years of controversy and after the definite and

It did not spring up ready-made from the brain of Lenin but was hammered out in the course of polemics (i.e. arguments, debates, disputations) and organisational struggles with the Menshevik, the reformist section of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, and in the course of the class struggle generally. obstinate betrayal of Marxist principles by the Mensheviks, did the formal and final split with the latter occur. The Bolsheviks (majority section) then expelled the Mensheviks and thereafter, until 1918, were known as the "Russian Social Democratic Labour Party" (Bolsheviks).

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTY**

What were the characteristics of this party? It is vitally important for students of politics to understand this, for unless they do, they cannot really understand either the course of the Russian Revolution nor the nature of the Communist parties which sprang up all over the world after the Russian Socialist Revolution of 1917. In other words, if they cannot understand this, they cannot understand either past history, present politics or the perspectives for the future of the world.

J. Stalin, in his historic work, "Foundations of Leninism," written in 1924, deals with six special features of the "Party of a new type."

**(1) THE PARTY IS THE VANGUARD OF THE WORKING CLASS:**

This conception was of course not a novel one—it is to be met with through the writings of Marx and Engels from the 1840's onward. In 1889, Engels in a letter said:—

“For the proletariat to be strong enough to conquer on the day of decision it is necessary, and this view Marx and I have upheld since 1847, that it should form its own party, separated from all others and opposed to them, **a class-conscious party.**”

In 1924 Stalin, elaborating this theme, stated:—“The party must absorb all the best elements of the working class, their experience, their revolutionary spirit, their selfless devotion to the cause of the proletariat.”

“We are,” said Lenin, “the party of a class and, therefore, **almost the entire class** (and in times of civil war the entire class) should act under the leadership of our Party, should adhere to our Party as closely as possible. But it would be Manilovism (i.e. smug complacency) and khvostism (i.e. following at the tail) to think that at any time under capitalism the entire class, or almost the entire class, would be able to rise to the level of consciousness of its vanguard, the Social Democratic Party.”

This fact is most important for an understanding of the “Party of a new type.” The Bolshevik Party was, in historical fact, a party to which the majority of the working class rallied and, in the time of civil war, the entire class (with insignificant exceptions) did act under the leadership of the party. But this did not mean that the working class as a whole rose to the level of political consciousness of the Party. The conditions of capitalism forbade such a high mass political level.

Even under Socialism, during the transition to Communism, the Party and the class do not become merged, though as the transition period develops and mass education with it, the difference **tends** to disappear. “Non-Party Bolsheviks” appear and bit by bit the very necessity for the Party will disappear. But this is a far perspective. Under capitalism and in the transition to Communism, while classes still exist (and there is an infiltration from more backward classes) the Party inevitably has a higher political level than the class.

**NEED FOR SCIENTIFIC SOCIALIST THEORY**

This concept of the Party as vanguard may seem self-evident but in fact it is one for which the Bolsheviks had to fight hard. A group known as the “Economists,” for instance, claimed that a vanguard party was unnecessary. They believed that the workers

would and should develop spontaneously and that a political party should, at the most, "follow in the wake of this movement and draw lessons from it." Lenin, however, expose this view, showed that it would leave the workers helpless in the face of the well-organised and planned capitalist attack and showed that the absence of a scientific socialist political theory would only mean that the workers would be at the mercy of bourgeois theory.

"Economism," in its worship of "spontaneity" and belittling of theory, was only doing what the "Revisionists" in Germany were also doing openly and what the 2nd International parties increasingly practised in reality. To leave the workers without a lead, without a theory of how to overthrow capitalism and attain socialism, to leave them without their own vanguard—this was, in practice to surrender to the bourgeoisie without a struggle.

The Party of a new type, then, leads the class. But the **class** leads the **masses**, i.e. the other toiling exploited strata—poor and middle farmers, small professional people, small business men, etc., etc.

Dimitrov, hero of the Reichstag fire trial, the first man to deal a severe blow at German Fascism, and later General Secretary of the 3rd International, says on this point:—

"Only a class which has a clear understanding of its own interests in the present . . . situation, interests that coincide with the fundamental interests of the people and which conducts its own proletarian policy **independent of the bourgeoisie** can inspire the non-proletarian labouring masses with confidence in its strength and enlist them in decisive struggle against those who are responsible for their privations and their sufferings."

The way in which "the Party leads the class and the class leads the masses," is shown in the history of the Soviet Union since the Revolution—including, indeed, the present period. In the Soviets, the trade unions, etc., the Party plays a leading role, while the class of which they are the vanguard exercises a leading guiding role with regard to the collective farmers, as they now are, or peasants.

If it were not for the "close tie between the Party and the non-Party masses" the former would not be able to perform its task of vanguard. It is necessary, in Lenin's words "to link itself with, and to a certain extent, if you like, to merge with the broadest masses of the toilers—primarily with the proletariat, but also with the non-proletarian masses."



## DEPENDENT ON SUPPORT OF THE MASSES

The concluding section of the "Short History of the C.P.S.U." quotes J. Stalin who explains the invincibility of the Bolsheviks as dependent on their connection with the broad masses of the peoples and supports it by a well-known story from Greek mythology about Antaeus, who derived his invincibility from his connection with the earth, his mother. Hercules, however, lifted him from the earth and suspended him in the air until he had throttled him. And Stalin, comparing Antaeus with the Bolsheviks, says: "They, like Antaeus, are strong because they maintain their connection with their mother, the masses, who gave birth to them, suckled them and reared them. And as long as they maintain connection with their mother, with the people, they have every chance of remaining invincible."

Before leaving the question of the "party of a new type" as the vanguard of the working class, we must again reiterate the importance of the role assigned by Lenin, Stalin and the Bolsheviks generally (not to forget Marx and Engels) to **theory**, the generalised experience of the world labour movement.

This, of course, is a very different conception of Marxism to the vulgar misrepresentation of anti-Marxist writers (who generally have not troubled to study Marxism at all) who love to present Marxism as a fatalistic "doctrine" which places all the emphasis on economic factors and ignores the role of persons and ideas. As we have seen, Lenin (on the basis of Marxism) conducted a stern fight against these ideas and the emphasis on the importance of theory in the working class movement is one of the most important differences between the party of a new type and the 2nd International parties, the Labour parties (Britain and N.Z. e.g.).

The British Labour movement, owing to historical reasons arising from Britain's world position, first in the 19th century and, later, under Imperialism, has always had a particular contempt for political theory and this has been one of its greatest weaknesses.

The British working class movement, indeed, has provided a painful example of the truth of Lenin's well-known statement: "Without a revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement . . . The role of vanguard can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory." (Lenin's "Selected Works," Vol. 2, pp. 47, 48.)

## (2) PARTY AS "ORGANISED" DETACHMENT OF WORKING CLASS:

"The Party is not only the vanguard, the class-conscious detachment of the working-class, but also an **organised** detachment of the working-class, with its own discipline, which is binding

on its members. Hence Party members must necessarily be members of some organisation of the Party. If the Party was not an **organised** detachment of the class, not a **system of organisation**, but a mere agglomeration of persons who declare themselves to be Party members but do not belong to any Party organisation and therefore are **not organised**, hence not obliged to obey Party decisions, the Party would never have a united will, it could never achieve the united action of its members, and, consequently, it would be unable to direct the struggle of the working class."

**Elementary, one would think? Yet, this formulation of the Party as an organised detachment of the working class in which all members must belong to a Party organisation and be subject to its discipline, provided the grounds for one of the sharpest and most basic differences between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks.**

The latter, led by Martov, thought it unnecessary for a Party member to belong to a Party organisation. Whereas, in Lenin's "Party of a new type" a member must be admitted into the Party, the Menshevik conception was of a member enrolling himself. Acceptance of the programme and financial support were the sole conditions of membership—and, in practice, the fact that it was not necessary to belong to any Party organisation meant that there was no means of even enforcing acceptance of the programme—let alone working in an organised fashion to put it into operation. The Menshevik conception was that of the New Zealand Labour Party, the British Labour Party and the 2nd International parties generally. In N.Z., for instance, a man or woman pays half a crown a year and may belong to a branch or not, just as he or she pleases. And, in practice, a member may have the most reactionary ideas and still be a member of "the Party."

#### **DISCIPLINE IS NECESSARY**

Furthermore, the party of a new type must be something more than a mere sum total of groups. The old party had been simply a sum total of groups and unity could only come through ideological influences. But the conditions of imperialism and the sharpened conditions of class struggle meant that the Party must become a formally organised whole, an organised Party, "and this implies the creation of a power, conversion of the authority of ideas into the authority of power, the subordination of the lower Party bodies to the higher Party bodies" (Lenin). For the Party to become such an organised whole, more than a mere arithmetical sum total, discipline is necessary. This discipline is equally binding on all members, leaders equally with rank and file. There is "one set of rules and uniform Party discipline."

The minority must submit to the majority, the lower Party bodies to the higher ones. Party work must be directed from a centre, to which lower organs submit.

Alongside the central direction of work there must be the democratic election of Party organisations. On this point, the "History of the C.P.S.U." states: "Of course, under the Tsarist autocracy the Party existed illegally, the Party organisations could not in those days be built up on the principle of election from below, and as a consequence, the Party had to be strictly conspiratorial. But Lenin considered that this **temporary** feature in the life of our Party would at once lapse with the elimination of Tsarism, when the Party would become open and legal, and the Party organisations would be built upon the principle of democratic elections, of **democratic centralism**."

This whole concept of a disciplined Party was particularly distasteful to the Russian bourgeois intellectuals who dabbled in the working class movement. But "the proletariat is not afraid of organisation and discipline . . . It is not the proletariat but certain intellectuals in our Party who lack self-training in the spirit of organisation and discipline," stated Lenin, who also said:—

#### OPPOSITION TO CONCEPTION OF DISCIPLINE

"The Russian nihilist (i.e. anarchist—Ed.) is especially addicted to this gentleman's anarchism (i.e. the idea of a Party without discipline, without organisation—Ed.). To him the Party organisation appears to be a monstrous 'factory,' the subordination of the part to the whole and the submission of the minority to the majority appears to him to be 'serfdom' . . . the division of labour under the leadership of a centre evokes tragi-comical lamentations about people being reduced to mere 'cogs and screws.'

" . . . The bare mention of the Party rules on organisation calls forth a contemptuous grimace and some disdainful remark to the effect that we could get along without rules . . . it seems clear, however, that these outcries against the alleged bureaucracy are an attempt to conceal the dissatisfaction with the personnel of these centres, a fig leaf. . . 'You are a bureaucrat because you were appointed by the Congress without my consent and against my wishes: you are a formalist because you seek support in the formal decisions of the Congress and not in my approval; you act in a crudely mechanical way, because your authority is the "mechanical" majority of the Party Congress and you do not consult my wish to be co-opted; you are an autocrat because you do not want to deliver power into the hands of the old gang' " (i.e., of Martov and other Menshevik leaders who refused to submit to the decisions of the 2nd Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. and accused Lenin of being a bureaucrat).



**JOSEPH STALIN**



## DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

The above mentioned principles of party organisation although fought out in Russia, mainly between 1902 and 1912, are nevertheless applicable to all "parties of the new type," founded after the Russian Revolution. The controversy about democratic centralism, too, is essentially the same controversy which has been and is still being waged between the Reformist and Communist in every part of the world. The fight is carried even into the "new type" parties themselves, for it is inevitable that the old ideas will be reflected in the minds of some who enter the new type Party.

Summing up the question of the differences between his ideas and those of the Mensheviks, Lenin pointed out that ideological unity (i.e. the possession of the same social political ideas) is insufficient. Organisational unity is also necessary, if victory is to be won. "In its struggle for power, the proletariat has no weapon but organisation. Disunited by the rule of anarchic competition in the bourgeois world, ground down by forced labour for capital, constantly thrust down to the 'lower depths' of utter destitution, savagery and degeneration, the proletariat can become and ultimately will become, an invincible force only when its ideological unification by the principles of Marxism is consolidated by the material unity of an organisation which will weld millions of toilers into an army of the working class."

### **(3) THE PARTY AS THE HIGHEST FORM OF THE CLASS ORGANISATION OF THE WORKING CLASS:**

"The Party is the organised detachment of the working class. But the Party is not the only organisation of the working class. The proletariat has in addition a great number of other organisations, which are indispensable in its correct struggle against the capitalist system—trade unions, co-operative societies, factory and shop organisations, parliamentary fractions, non-Party women's associations, the press, cultural and educational organisations, youth leagues, military revolutionary organisations (in times of direct revolutionary action) . . . soviets of deputies (as the state form of organisation when the proletariat is in power) etc." (Stalin, "Foundations of Leninism.")

The problem is how can all these organisations be united and their energies be "directed into a single channel" so that they serve the interests of the proletariat. How can they be given a common leadership? "Where is that central organisation which is not only able, having the necessary experience, to work out such a general line, but also capable because of its authority, of prevailing upon all



"This does not mean, however, that non-Party organisations like trade unions, co-operative societies, etc., must be formally subordinated to Party leadership. It means simply that the members of the Party belonging to these organisations and doubtless exercising influence in them should do all they can to persuade these non-Party organisations to draw closer to the Party of the proletariat in their work and **voluntarily** (our emphasis—Ed.) accept its political guidance."

### THE PARTY AND WORKING CLASS ORGANISATIONS

Hence the enemies of the "Party of a new type" are wrong when they say that it wishes to "dictate" to unions or other organisations of which its members are also members. Such "dictation," indeed, would be an entirely inadequate substitute for persuasion, influence, education.

"This organisation is the Party of the proletariat," the highest form of its class organisation. The Party is thus fitted because it is the meeting ground of the best (i.e. the most politically advanced) members of the proletariat; it is a training ground for leaders; and it is by virtue of its "experience an authority, the only organisation capable of centralising the leadership of the struggle of the proletariat and transforming each and every non-Party organisation of the proletariat into an auxiliary body, a transmission belt linking it with the class."

**these organisations to carry out this line, in order to attain unity of direction and preclude the possibility of working at cross purposes?"**

Under capitalism, it is obvious that the only way in which the Marxists can widen their base in the working class, and develop the struggle against capitalism, for socialism, is by such methods of persuasion. Under the period of transition from capitalism to socialism and communism, n.b. under the dictatorship of the "proletariat," it is no less necessary for the same educational, persuasive methods to be used.

Thus, in the period since the Revolution of October, 1917, it has been necessary for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to work within the Soviets, the trades unions, co-operative and other organisations on these same lines, using not coercive but educational methods of exercising its leading role. As Sidney and Beatrice Webb point out in "Soviet Communism," such dictatorial methods are impossible to operate in a society which is building Communism.

But in the struggle against capitalism and for socialism, the leadership of the Party, the "highest form of class organisation,"

is necessary and the people who assert that the trade unions, for instance, should be independent of the Party of the working class, do an ill-service to the working class, for they would deprive it of leadership, of co-ordination, of a general staff. These theories of independent non-Party organisations and particularly of "independent" trade unions mean in reality independence of Marxism, **dependence** on capitalist influences.

Not only in Tsarist Russia, but in England, U.S.A., and New Zealand, these theories of "independent" trade unions have been and are common in various forms. The old type of trade union leader in Britain and N.Z. up to the 90's—and even later, particularly in N.Z.—who fought even against the formation of a Labour Party, were one extreme example. The American I.W.W., whose influence made itself felt quite strongly in Australian and N.Z. labour circles, possessed basically similar theories—reflecting, unknowingly, the influence of capitalism.

To-day, also, these theories are prevalent in various forms in New Zealand, and, in the main, are used by reformist, right wing officials who fear to see the trade unions going beyond the narrow economic issues on to the wider political issues with which they are actually bound up inextricably.

#### **(4) THE PARTY AS THE WEAPON OF THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT:**

"The Party is not only the highest form of class association of the proletarians; it is at the same time a **weapon** in the hands of the proletariat **for** the achievement of the dictatorship where that has not been achieved, **for** the consolidation and extension of the dictatorship where it has already been achieved." (Stalin.)

How necessary is the Party for the achievement and, when achieved, the consolidation of the dictatorship, is shown by the history of post-war Europe and, before that, of the Paris Commune.

The Paris Commune achieved a virtual dictatorship of the proletariat and lost it, because of the lack of a leading workers' party. Italy and Germany had the proletarian revolution, the dictatorship, in their grasp and abdicated power because there was no 'party of a new type' to see that the opportunity was grasped. The same would have occurred in Russia—actually did occur in the first months of the bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1917 but the Bolshevik Party was there to recover the lost ground and lead the proletariat in the successful October struggle.

But power must be maintained, consolidated, extended. And, certainly almost everyone now realises, says Lenin, that the Bol-

sheviks could not have maintained themselves in power for two and a half years, and not even for two and a half months, without the strictest discipline, the "truly iron discipline, in our Party, and without the fullest and unreserved support rendered it by the whole mass of the working class, that is, by all those belonging to this class who think, who are honest, self-sacrificing, influential, and capable of leading and attracting the backward masses. (Left Wing Communism, chapter II.)

As we saw previously, the leadership of the Party under the dictatorship is leadership and not the **dictatorship** of the Party. The Party must be able to imbue "millions of proletarians with the spirit of discipline and organisation."

The Party, then, is the instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

"From this it follows that when classes disappear and the dictatorship of the proletariat dies out, the Party will also die out." Stalin: "Foundations of Leninism.") Until the capitalist encirclement of the Soviet Union is replaced by a "socialist encirclement," the Party in the U.S.S.R. will necessarily remain strong and vigilant.

#### **(5) THE PARTY AS THE EXPRESSION OF UNITY OF WILL:**

The Party needs iron discipline to carry out its task. "But iron discipline in the Party is impossible without unity of will and without complete unity of action on the part of all members of the Party. This does not mean that the possibility of a conflict of opinion within the Party is thus excluded. On the contrary, iron discipline does not preclude but pre-supposes criticism and conflicts of opinion within the Party. Least of all does this mean that this discipline must be 'blind' discipline.

"On the contrary, iron discipline does not preclude but pre-supposes conscious and voluntary submission, for **only conscious discipline can be truly iron discipline.** (Our emphasis—Ed.) But after a discussion has been closed, after criticism has run its course and a decision has been made, unity of will and unity of action of all Party members become indispensable conditions without which Party unity and iron discipline in the Party are inconceivable." (Stalin) This applies before and, to an even greater degree after, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

"Whoever in the least weakens the iron discipline of the Party of the proletariat (especially during its dictatorship) actually

aids the bourgeoisie, against the proletariat," stated Lenin.

Hence, "the existence of factions is incompatible with Party unity and with its iron discipline." Factions are alternative centres of leadership and are incompatible with democratic centralism. A party (e.g. a 2nd International Party) could "permit" themselves the luxury of such liberalism because they **"have no desire to lead the proletariat to power."**

Before leaving this subject, however, it must be emphasised that so far from inner-Party contests of opinion and criticism being forbidden, they are, on the contrary, indispensable. But such criticism must be conducted in the spirit of **building** the Party and they must be conducted through the proper channels and on proper occasions, not in a disruptive, undemocratic way. Actually, one of the features that distinguishes the "Party of a new type" from the old social-democratic, Labour Parties, is the existence **in practice** of inner democracy and also practice of open self-criticism of their own mistakes by the parties of the new type.

#### **ATTITUDE TOWARDS MISTAKES**

This practice of frankly admitting mistakes cannot be understood by the "old parties" who regard it as simply "breast-beating." But as Lenin said: "The attitude of a political party towards its own mistakes is one of the most important and surest signs of judging how earnest the party is and how it **in practice** fulfils its obligations towards its **class** and to the toiling masses." And furthermore:—

"All revolutionary parties which have hitherto perished did so because they **grew conceited**, failed to see where their strength lay, and **feared to speak of their weaknesses**. But we shall not perish, for we do not fear to speak of our weaknesses and will learn to overcome them." ("Short History.")

Lastly, it must be noted that in the history of the Bolshevik Party and of other new type parties a direct connection has been traced between the factionalists and the enemies of the working class. The classical example, of course, is that of Trotsky and his co-plotters, who for years disguised their close organisational connection with, their employment by, the bitterest enemies of the Soviet people.

**Open discussion and the taking and enforcing of decisions arrived at on the basis of those decisions—this is the best way, as history has proved—to deal with factionalism. For factionalists can never stand up to this test. Intrigue and whispering is their natural breed-**



ing place. The more serious the political situation is, the more necessary it is to deal sternly with factionalists.

#### (6) THE PARTY IS STRENGTHENED BY PURGING ITSELF OF OPPORTUNIST ELEMENTS

What is the source of factionalism within the Party? J. Stalin answers:—

“The opportunist elements in the Party are the source of Party factionalism. The proletariat is not an isolated class. A steady stream of peasants, small tradesmen and intellectuals, who have become proletarianised by the by the development of capitalism, flows into the ranks of the proletariat. At the same time the upper strata of the proletariat—principally the trade union leaders and labour members of parliament—who have been fed by the bourgeoisie out of the super-profits extracted from the colonies, are undergoing a process of decay.

“It is this stratum which provides the chief support of the 2nd International Parties “and, in our days, the principal **social** (not military) support of the **bourgeoisie**.” And these petty-bourgeois groups even penetrate into the “party of a new type,” “into which they introduce an element of hesitancy and opportunism, of disintegration and the undermining of self-confidence. They are the source of factionalism, splits, disorganisation. Fighting imperialism with such allies in one’s rear is as bad as being caught between two fires, coming both from the front and from the rear. Therefore, no quarter should be given in fighting such elements, and their relentless expulsion from the Party is a precedent for the successful struggle against imperialism.”

#### PRUNING STRENGTHENS THE TREE

“Such elements cannot be “lived down” or “overcome” by ideological struggle within the Party,” Stalin continues. “They must be removed from the Party altogether. The proletarian parties develop and become strong by ridding themselves of opportunists and reformists. The necessity for this was shown both in the history of the Bolsheviks themselves but also, strikingly, in the case of the Italian Socialist Party during the revolutionary crisis after the war.” (i.e. 1914-18.)

Lenin points out that “may even prove useful (in critical times) to remove certain excellent comrades who might and do waver in the direction of desiring to maintain ‘unity’ with the reformists—to remove these from all responsible positions . . . The retirement of wavering leaders at such a time does not



weaken but strengthens the Party, the labour movement and the revolution."

The strengthening of the Party by purging itself of opportunist elements is therefore, the sixth and last of the special features of the "Party of a new type," dealt with by J. Stalin, in his "Foundations of Leninism."

Imperialism is a world system. It is no longer possible to regard the proletarian revolution "in this or that advanced country as a separate and contained unit, facing a separate national front of capital as its opposite pole." Today, this point of view is inadequate.

After the war of 1914-18 the 2nd International had plainly showed itself unfit to lead the proletariat in its historic revolutionary task. Its collapse in face of the war situation, betrayal of the anti-war principles enunciated in the Basle Manifesto (see "Historical Background of the World Labour Movement") was the logical culmination of years of opportunism. In an article published on November 1, 1914, Lenin said:—

"Overwhelmed by opportunism, the Second International has died. Down with opportunism, and long live the Third International, purged not only of 'deserters'. . . but also of opportunism."

### THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL

It was not until March, 1919, however, that it was possible to hold, in Moscow, the Inaugural Congress of the Third International. This Congress cleared up the basic question of democracy and dictatorship. The centrists at the Congress put the question as though it were democracy **or** dictatorship, but Lenin made it clear that the question was really **which** dictatorship—the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or of the working class. The 2nd Congress of the Third (Communist) International, as it became named, was held in July, 1920, and it was here that the character and role of workers' parties "in the epoch of world revolution" were laid down.

The principles of party organisation described previously in these pages were accepted as the principles of parties affiliated to the new International.

The statutes adopted regarding the character of the International itself in relation to its affiliations stated in part:—

"The Communist International must really and in fact be a united party of the whole world. The parties which work in the

different countries are only its individual sections." The battle cry, "Workers of all lands, unite!" assumed shape with the creation of the Third International. International unity of action, however, could only be based on voluntary obedience, self-discipline, just as individual membership of a Party could be. Therefore, the Executive Committee of the International, which led it between Congresses, had the power to expel persons, groups or parties which acted against the International's decisions. This, of course, was the only way of ensuring the continuance of a united organisation under such circumstances.

The Executive Committee, referred to above, was elected at Congresses of the International and consisted of members of the various affiliated national organisations—in **practice**, leading members of the more important sections, the C.P.S.U., the British, French, German, Finnish, Spanish, Chinese, etc.

For obvious reasons of convenience, the offices of the Executive Committee had to be in the capital of the U.S.S.R. The existence in the U.S.S.R. of a friendly government and of the strongest section, together with the very practical reason that no other government would be likely to permit it to operate in **their** territory, made this inevitable. So it was, then, that the Third (Communist) International came into existence.

During a quarter of a century it welded the Communist Parties of the world into fighting organisations based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism. An ideological unity was forged in conference and in the common struggle against world imperialism.

### **RISE OF FASCISM**

The growth of Fascism in the '30's, threatening as it did the elementary prerequisites for social progress, imposed new tasks on international Communism. The Communists led the fight against the Fascists and their allies in the capitalist democracies.

**The U.S.S.R. during this period was forged into a Socialist society which was also a world power of the front rank. The Soviet State became the beacon light of workers and progressives throughout the capitalist world.**

The Fascists saw in the U.S.S.R. the greatest obstacle to their plans for world domination and strove to utilise the antagonism between Socialist and capitalist society to further their own ends of conquest. The so-called "Bolshevik menace" was the Nazi diplomatists' trump card for disrupting Soviet attempts to build a united front against Fascist aggression.

In 1943 during the height of the struggle between the Fascist Powers and the Anglo-Soviet-American Alliance, the Communist International was dissolved on the recommendation of its executive which was ratified by all affiliated parties.

**The Communist International had done its work. Mature Communist parties, based on the principles of Marx, Lenin and Stalin and on the experiences of nearly a century of working class struggle, had been established in every important country in the world.**

What organisational forms will working class political unity take in the future? We do not know. The Italian and Greek Communist Parties however, have put forward suggestions for a broad international organisation comprised of both Communist and Socialist parties.

Whether this suggestion will mature cannot yet be stated. A World Federation of Trade Unions has been formed, but this of course is no SUBSTITUTE for an international-political organisation.

#### **THE PARTY IN NEW ZEALAND**

It is not desirable that this pamphlet should endeavour to deal with the history and special problems of the Communist Party of New Zealand. Other opportunity will be found to do this and in the meantime only one or two general remarks are necessary.

The New Zealand Communist Party, as it was then called, was formed in December, 1920 at a conference at Wellington. It was thus very close on the heels of the Australian and British parties. This fact showed that New Zealand had been drawn into the orbit of world politics from which it could never disassociate itself. It was not until 1928, however, that the New Zealand Communist Party became affiliated to the Communist International, at the Sixth Congress of the latter body.

**The basic principles of Communism apply to the New Zealand Party as they do to any other Communist Party. Our task is to apply those basic principles to our own individual problems. New Zealand has its special problems—problems which are exactly paralleled nowhere else in the world. The relations between the workers and the farmers, for example, needs special consideration. The leading role of the working class amongst the exploited classes and the leading role of the Communist Party within the working class are basic here as elsewhere.**

#### **WORKING CLASS UNITY**

One problem which has come to the fore throughout the world in the period since the rise of Fascism in Europe is that of the

organisational unity of the working class. In Spain, for example, a united workers' party was forged during the civil war. In Italy, unity between the Socialists and Communists is now being sought. In New Zealand, we have on various occasions from 1922 onwards, applied for affiliation to the New Zealand Labour Party. **Our ultimate aim must be one united workers' party in New Zealand.**

Organisational unity can only be brought about, however, on the basis of democratic centralism and the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism. Any other basis of organisational unity would be unthinkable.

## **FIVE MAIN CONCLUSIONS**

The "History of the C.P.S.U. (B)" draws five main conclusions from the history of that Party, which can be summarised as follows:—

- (1) The victory of the working class revolution is impossible without what has been termed in these pages "a Party of a new type."
- (2) Such a Party cannot perform its task unless it has mastered Marxist-Leninist theory. And, this means real mastery of the living science of Marxism-Leninism, not a mere mechanical knowledge of formulas and conclusions which may need revising in the light of historical changes. "Marxism is not a theory but a guide to action."
- (3) The working class revolution cannot be achieved unless the petty-bourgeois reformist parties are utterly vanquished and the "Party of a new type" assumes sole ideological leadership of the working class.
- (4) The Party must wage unrelenting war against the opportunists within its own ranks as these opportunists are in fact the vehicles of bourgeois influence among the working class and in the Party."
- (5) The Party cannot perform its task if it "grows conceited, ceases to observe the defects in its work, and fears to acknowledge its mistakes and honestly to correct them in time."

"A Party perishes if it shuts itself up in its narrow party shell, if it severs itself from the masses, if it allows itself to be covered with bureaucratic rust."

It is precisely because the Bolsheviki Party, the Party of a new type always **"has maintained connection with the broad masses**

**of the people,"** that it has been able and will continue to be able to perform its historic tasks.

"That is the clue," said Stalin, "to the invincibility of Bolshevik leadership."

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Suggested additional reading:— History of the C.P.S.U., Short Course, Foundations of Leninism (J. Stalin), "Left-Wing" Communism (V. I. Lenin), Selected Works, Vol. X (Lenin), Communist Manifesto (Marx and Engels), Outline History of the N.Z. Labour Movement, (S. Scott), Dimitrov's Report to the 7th Congress on the United Front Against Fascism.







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